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ABSTRACT

This booklet describes how managers and their organizations can benefit by preparing for formal developmental experiences. Such preparation includes clarifying expectations, understanding and increasing motivation for attending, and making sure that the work environment supports the changes in both behavior and perspective that lead to more effective leadership. Managers can prepare by knowing what to expect from an open-enrollment program--those designed without a specific organization in mind--or from a customized program, which might focus on current challenges to an organization. It also helps to know how the program is structured. For example, are the classes in a classroom or are they in the woods? Will the evenings be free or will there be homework? Administrators should also reflect on what their personal expectations are for the program, particularly as these expectations will affect their job performance. Once the expectations are clarified, then it should be easier to develop the motivation that will be needed to make the most of the development program. Managers must also prepare their workplace by arranging to have their work covered, by sharing their goals with peers and managers, by assessing and taking care of roadblocks, and by integrating the lessons learned into leadership behavior. (RJM)

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IDEAS INTO ACTION GUIDEBOOKS

FOR THE PRACTICING MANAGER

Preparing for Development

Making the Most of Formal Leadership Programs

Jennifer Martineau and Ellie Johnson

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AN IDEAS INTO ACTION GUIDEBOOK

Preparing for Development

Making the Most of Formal Leadership Programs

Ideas Into Action Guidebooks

Aimed at managers and executives who are concerned with their own and others' development, each guidebook in this series gives specific advice on how to complete a developmental task or solve a leadership problem.

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AN IDEAS INTO ACTION GUIDEBOOK

Preparing for Development

Making the Most of Formal Leadership Programs

Jennifer Martineau and Ellie Johnson

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Creative Leadership
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The Ideas Into Action Guidebook Series

This series of guidebooks draws on the practical knowledge that the Center for Creative Leadership (CCL) has generated in the course of more than thirty years of research and educational activity conducted in partnership with hundreds of thousands of managers and executives. Much of this knowledge is shared – in a way that is distinct from the typical university department, professional association, or consultancy. CCL is not simply a collection of individual experts, although the individual credentials of its staff are impressive; rather it is a community, with its members holding certain principles in common and working together to understand and generate practical responses to today's leadership and organizational challenges.

The purpose of the series is to provide managers with specific advice on how to complete a developmental task or solve a leadership challenge. In doing that the series carries out CCL's mission to advance the understanding, practice, and development of leadership for the benefit of society worldwide. We think you will find the Ideas Into Action Guidebooks an important addition to your leadership toolkit.

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- *Ongoing Feedback: How to Get It, How to Use It*
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- *Three Keys to Development: Using Assessment, Challenge, and Support to Drive Your Leadership*
- *Feedback That Works: How to Build and Deliver Your Message*
- *Communicating Across Cultures*
- *Learning from Life: Turning Life's Lessons into Leadership Experience*
- *Keeping Your Career on Track: Twenty Success Strategies*

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Executive Brief

Managers attend leadership development programs for any number of reasons. Sometimes an organization will nominate a specific manager for a program, or send all high-potential managers through a series of development programs. Some managers seek out development programs on their own as part of their personal career objectives. If you're scheduled to participate in a leadership development program, or if you're considering such a program, you can substantially increase the benefits to yourself and to your organization by preparing for the development experience. This guidebook will show you how to prepare yourself and how you can help prepare your colleagues and your work environment to make the most of a formal development program.

Why Prepare for a Leadership Development Program?

Leadership development programs represent a large financial investment and personal commitment. They can have a major impact on careers and on personal lives. It's surprising then that many managers show up for such programs with little or no idea of what to expect and what they hope to gain.

Preparing yourself for a development program enhances the learning experience in several ways. It increases your familiarity with the content of the program so that you can match it to your specific developmental needs. Preparation cuts down on the surprises and distractions you are likely to face during a developmental experience. Preparation also helps you create the support network you need to improve your chances of developing the skills, perspectives, and behavior that will make you a more effective leader. However you made the decision to attend, prepare by clarifying your expectations, understanding and increasing your motivation for attending, and making sure that your work environment will support the changes you make in meeting your leadership challenges.

Preparing Your Expectations

Preparation includes more than knowing the program's date and place. It's likely that you will be asked to complete some "prework" assessments, which may include formal feedback surveys that are distributed to your direct reports, your peers, and your manager. You might also be asked about the leadership challenges you want to work on during the program and what goals you hope to reach.

What to Expect from an Open Enrollment Program

- Expect to work harder and on your own to make the connections between the training material and your company's structure, culture, and issues.
- Expect to make some decisions on how much specific information about your company's problems and plans you will share. Some of your classmates may be managers in competing organizations.
- Expect your experience to be shaped by the diversity of participants, who can give you a broader perspective on the role you play in your company's culture and strategy.
- Expect your experience to be just one part of a fuller personal developmental effort for which you take personal responsibility.
- Expect that your organization, your co-workers, and even your family and friends may look for examples of how your experience has influenced your behavior.

Your expectations of a development program will be clearer if you understand at the start whether the program is an "open enrollment" type of program or whether it has been customized in some way for your organization. Each type of program is different in structure, tone, and content.

Open enrollment programs are by and large conducted by organizations outside of your own company. Such organizations may sponsor programs at their own facilities or they may provide

programs on a more or less regular basis in rented facilities in major cities. If you participate in such a program you can expect that the other people attending will come from many different companies, different industries, and different geographic locations.

A "custom" leadership development program is designed to answer the development issues and needs of a particular organization. Customization may include using the organization's current challenges as the basis for case studies and exercises, and using the industry-specific language familiar to employees. The training organization might use instructors from inside the client organization whom it has certified to run the program. If you participate in such a program your classmates will come from your own organization. The program may be held at the training organization's facilities, at your company, or at some neutral site.

What to Expect from a Customized Program

- Expect the content to target your company's strategic direction, whether that's e-business, globalization, developing bench strength, or some other issue.
- Expect the content to relate directly to issues you currently deal with at work.
- Expect your classmates to be people with whom you have an ongoing relationship. You may want to think about how organizational politics might affect candor among participants.
- Expect that the program will be one part of a larger developmental process. It may be that the same concepts and skills are being taught to people in other functional areas and at other levels of your company. Your organization may expect new concepts and skills to be put to use and may reinforce their use.
- Expect that your organization will have its own expectations. You may have to illustrate in some way how the developmental experience positively affected your performance. Organizations that make an investment in sending people to development programs want to see tangible, real-world results.

Because leadership development programs take many forms, you'll get more from the experience if you know in advance how the program is structured. If you've pictured a classroom, for example, then you may feel disoriented in a program that takes you into the woods. If you've planned to check out the local nightlife you'll be unpleasantly surprised if after-dinner sessions and homework assignments are on the agenda.

Formal developmental experiences challenge managers by presenting new perspectives and encouraging the growth of new abilities in a short, concentrated time. They ask you to do things that are different from your everyday work activities. That difference is what takes you out of the familiar, provides insights, and allows you to experiment with new behaviors. Understanding what you'll be asked will help you minimize distractions and focus on the program's purpose.

A Format That Fits

Use this checklist during a conversation with the program's representative to determine what kind of developmental experience you can expect from the development program you plan to attend.

- Will I be sitting in a classroom, listening to theoretical information and learning from case studies?
- Will I be videotaped or be observed in some other way during simulations of work decisions and actions?
- Will I have to divulge personal information about my fears and shortcomings in a group setting?
- Will there be homework and tests?
- Will I be free in the evening or will I be expected to stay with the group?

Personal Expectations

Before You Go

- Read the program brochure.
- Ask the program sponsor any questions you have that are not answered in written descriptions.
- Talk with people who have attended the program.

Leadership development programs are designed to help you become more effective in the position you have. They also help you develop perspectives and skills that will serve you beyond your current job with your current organization. As you gather information about the purpose and content of the program, match what you learn to the immediate issues you are dealing with at work and to your long-term personal and career goals.

On the job. Think about your leadership strengths and weaknesses. Do you struggle with motivating your direct reports? Do you want better communication between yourself and your staff? Do you have trouble delegating? Does your manager discount your ideas? Have you received feedback from others that contradicts the way you see yourself? Has a performance review indicated a serious weakness?

Reading the program description and talking with the program's sponsors and past participants can help you match developmental content to your developmental needs. Program descriptions generally list specific competencies that will be addressed, such as problem solving, developing others, managing teams, communication, valuing diversity, managing conflict, values and vision, self-awareness, and so forth.

It may seem that all of the program's content is relevant to your list of strengths and weaknesses. Even so, it's helpful to build a specific idea of what you want to get out of the experience. Some parts of a formal development program are bound to speak to you more personally and urgently than others. These significant content

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areas most likely match up with the developmental needs you have identified as having the highest priority because they have the most direct connection to the skill areas you want to improve.

List three areas where you believe strengthening your leadership skills would make you more effective at your job. We have included a few items as examples.

I would like to be better at influencing others.
I want to know how to channel my drive and ambition more productively.
I would like to learn how to solve problems more creatively.

In the future. Besides looking at your current professional situation, you should also consider your long-term career goals. Are you looking to advance in your current organization? Do you want to move to another company in a different industry? Have you been thinking about setting up your own business? Does the idea of leaving an established organization for the adrenaline of a start-up company excite you? Do you think about leaving the corporate world and contributing your talents to a nonprofit organization? Do you want to move from the nonprofit world to the corporate arena?

It's a virtual certainty that the future holds some changes in job responsibilities and employment for you. What skills are you going to need for the kind of future you have in mind for yourself?

Will you need to be very accomplished in selling yourself and your ideas? Will you need to be able to elicit the highest contribution of other people? Will you need to quickly establish rapport and trust with people you work with but never see in person? Will you need to hone your ability to prioritize tasks and projects?

Just as you did when comparing the program's content to your current work situation, look for themes common to the developmental experience and your future plans. Reflect on how the program content relates to your building those skills. A formal developmental experience can have a ripple effect in your life, resulting not just in the fairly immediate improvements your company, your manager, and yourself have in mind, but extending beyond your work life and your current career situation. By clarifying what you expect to get from the experience, you will increase what you are able to learn.

Think about your career goals.
Briefly describe your goals in the space below.

As you review the career goals you've described, think about the skill areas you need to develop to realize those goals. Record your developmental needs in the space provided.

Career Goals	Developmental Need	Connection to Goal

Organizational Expectations

Leadership development isn't a small investment. Your company expects to get a return on that investment. What kind of a return is anticipated?

In most cases, leadership development initiatives are linked to a company's high-level strategic direction. That can include such things as creating a flatter, more responsive organization, developing bench strength for better succession planning, pushing toward more global operations, and even changing a corporate culture that hampers productivity and innovation.

If your manager has nominated you, or selected you, to receive the training, you should also find out what he or she expects from you as a result. It may be that your organization has identified you as a candidate for promotion to a job with greater responsibili-

ties and which requires new leadership abilities. Your manager may see a particular area, such as conflict resolution or team building, where you could benefit from better-developed skills.

If you aren't sure of why you were chosen for a leadership development program, ask your manager. Ask how the program ties in with corporate strategy. This will give you a chance to clear up any possible misconceptions you may have and to connect the program content to the purposes intended by your organization and your manager. Making the connections between your personal development and your company's larger goals will give you a broad and meaningful context in which to learn new concepts and behaviors.

Preparing Your Motivation

Knowing what to expect from a formal developmental experience is one key to making the most from that experience. Another is being motivated to learn from such an experience. Your attitude shapes your experience. If you find yourself dreading the development program you're scheduled to attend, try to adjust your attitude so that you can increase the benefits and decrease your resistance. The activities that follow will help you think about and define how motivated you are toward the development program you're considering.

The Vacationer

Some people eagerly attend development programs because they see them as a pleasant break from work. They like traveling to a different place. They look forward to the social aspects of the program. They welcome a change from the routine. How would you rate your attitude toward participating in the program?

1	2	3	4	5
○	○	○	○	○

This doesn't describe me. This sounds just like me.

The Hostage

Some people resent being asked or ordered to take part in development programs. They see such training as a distraction from important work. They may think that being selected for development negatively reflects on their work performance. They may think that any training that doesn't focus on nuts and bolts (computer skills training, for example, or improving financial acumen) is frivolous and a waste of time and money. How would you rate your attitude in this regard?

1	2	3	4	5
○	○	○	○	○

This doesn't describe me. This sounds just like me.

The Learner

Some people jump at the chance to learn more about themselves and how they can be more effective in their work. They see development programs as a company benefit. They expect to gain useful insights and skills. They are prepared to focus their attention and energy on the program. Where does your attitude lie on this scale?

1	2	3	4	5
○	○	○	○	○

This doesn't describe me. This sounds just like me.

These simple guides aren't meant to map all of the factors that go into determining your motivation toward attending a leadership development program. But they can be helpful if you use them as an informal snapshot of your feelings toward attending such a program. Take some time to reflect on your answers. What is it about your scheduled developmental experience that makes you feel this way? What can you do to become more familiar with the program so that you can get more from the experience?

Enhancing Your Motivation

One way you can increase your enthusiasm for a formal developmental experience is to reflect on the benefits. Take some time to think about how such an experience might connect with your career interests, professional concerns, and personal growth. Consider your personal values and how they play out in your work life and your personal life. Use the following checklist to help you focus your reflection on the benefits you might reap from a development program.

	Strongly Agree				Strongly Disagree
	1	2	3	4	5
I value development.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I want to maximize my potential as a leader.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I have ambitions to rise higher in my organization and succeed in my career.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I want a safe and supportive environment within which I can explore complex management issues.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I want to learn new techniques for presenting my ideas to upper management.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I can benefit from learning how others have communicated and led major organizational initiatives.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I want non-biased feedback about how I come across to other people.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I want to know how I can leverage my individual strengths to be a more effective manager.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I act in ways that work against my career goals.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I want to practice new behaviors and skills in a nonthreatening environment.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I need time to focus on myself, my personal growth, and my career goals.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
New experiences will make me more marketable inside and outside of my organization.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I could use more effective strategies for motivating my direct reports.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I want to learn how to influence others and to lead in situations where I don't have positional power and authority.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I could use more effective strategies for dealing with my boss.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

A formal development program can provide these benefits and others. By reflecting on what you could be doing better, where you would benefit from new insights, and how you can become a more effective leader, you can begin to see connections between your interests and the aims of the program. Making those connections will enhance your motivation for attending and learning from the experience. If your responses to the preceding statements are positive, then you have several reasons for participating fully in the development program you're considering. Use those positive responses to focus your motivation.

Another strategy to developing a stronger commitment to attending a development program is to consider the implications of not participating. Managers who resist making changes or ignore developmental needs risk derailing their careers. Consider the following questions as a means of shoring up your motivation to learn from a development program.

	Yes	No
Am I relying on my track record for promotion?	❍	❍
Do I depend too much on the skills in which I am strongest?	❍	❍
Does the feedback I've received about my leadership skills match the way I see myself?	❍	❍
Can I build an effective team and lead it to its goal?	❍	❍
If I continue with the same management tactics I use now will my direct reports continue to perform well?	❍	❍
Will a lack of feedback hinder my developing effective leadership skills?	❍	❍
Can I afford not to develop a broader understanding of my organization's strategy?	❍	❍
Can I succeed by relegating interpersonal skills to a lower rung than technical skills?	❍	❍
Can I work effectively within my organization if I cannot learn to understand diverse viewpoints, personalities, and communication styles?	❍	❍

Preparing Your Workplace

Participating in a formal development program is just the first step in building skills that can make you a more effective leader. Like many others who attend similar programs, you may return to work energized by new ideas, excited about what you've learned, and eager to put your insights and skills into practice.

That's when you discover how difficult it is to change entrenched, habitual behaviors. You may not have ever considered how your work environment can work against your developing and practicing new strategies and skills.

Unless you prepare your work environment for what happens after a developmental experience you can lose much of the benefit.

Taking Care of Business

Because you want to devote your full attention to the development program you attend, you'll want to eliminate potential distractions before you go. Here are some suggestions:

- Arrange for a colleague to handle your responsibilities while you are away.
- If you must maintain contact with your office, arrange to call in at a set time each day and ask your associates to hold their questions until then.
- Leave a message on your voicemail system telling callers when you will return and refer them to an appropriate colleague for urgent matters.
- Leave an "out of the office" message on your e-mail so that correspondents won't expect an immediate reply.

- Clear up pressing work before you go so you won't feel as though you're falling behind during the program.
- Set a time when you will call home and ask not to be interrupted at other times except in case of emergency.
- Take care of personal matters that might worry you if you leave them unattended.
- Complete preliminary program assignments before you leave the office.

Taking Care of Colleagues

Your leadership development program doesn't affect only you. It also involves and affects the people with whom you work. Your colleagues, your direct reports, and your manager have their own thoughts and feelings about your attending a development program. They're likely to interpret its significance in different ways. Some peers may be envious that you're getting away from the office or might think that your being selected has something to do with a rumored company restructuring. Your direct reports may be quite willing to think that you really do need a course to tell you how to motivate your staff. You can alleviate some of the speculation and foster support by addressing perceptions before you leave for the program and by sharing your goals with others.

Set the Record Straight

In order to combat unproductive speculation about the purpose of a development program, be straightforward about the reasons for your attending.

- *Being straight with your boss:* "I want to develop my leadership ability and so I asked for the opportunity. The people in HR recommended this particular program."

- *Being straight with your peers:* "Now that our competition is much fiercer and our customers expect so much more, senior management believes that we need better ways of making decisions, communicating change, and encouraging innovation. The company has been sending managers to this program for a couple of years. It has a good reputation for providing insights into how to achieve those goals."
- *Being straight with your direct reports:* "I know that the grapevine carries some pretty strange perceptions of this program. I've checked it out and found it's helped make some impressive changes in some of our other business units. So I'm not going there just to play games and make things out of string and construction paper. I fully expect this program to help me become more effective in doing my job."

Share Your Goals

Your peers, your direct reports, and your manager may be formally involved in the prework for the development program you're attending. Some programs solicit assessments on your leadership ability through 360-degree-feedback instruments or other kinds of questionnaires. Whether or not others are involved in this preliminary process, by sharing with others your goals for attending the program you can build the support you need to tackle the developmental challenges you bring back from the program.

- *Sharing goals with your boss:* "I know you nominated me for this program to help me become more confident in making decisions and taking appropriate risks. I agree that I need to do that and I'm committed to learning all I can. After I

get back I'd appreciate your giving me regular feedback on how well I'm applying what I've learned."

- *Sharing goals with your peers:* "I've read all I can get my hands on about this program and from what I can see it provides the kinds of ideas that can really make a difference in how we work together. It would help me and I think it would help all of us if I could present some of what I learn to you at a group meeting. Can we schedule that meeting for the Monday after I get back?"
- *Sharing goals with your direct reports:* "My responsibilities have changed, just as other things have changed in our company. I know I could do a better job listening to you, coaching and supporting you, and making sure you have the resources you need. That's what I am hoping to learn how to do from this program."

Taking Care of Roadblocks

In almost every organization there are barriers that get in the way of learning new skills and practicing new behaviors. Good ideas, innovative practices, and improved methods get tripped up by deadline pressures, bureaucratic policies, resistance from key people, and other roadblocks. You may have observed this in your own organization. In the face of these obstacles it's often easier for managers who attend formal development programs to revert to their old way of doing things rather than make changes that can lead to more effective leadership.

Assessing Roadblocks

Before you go to your development program, anticipate the organizational roadblocks that may keep you from using what

you've learned or that can make it difficult for you to make changes. Common obstacles to leadership development include:

- *Time.* Will you be met with pressing matters and interruptions when you return from the program that will make it difficult to find time to review course materials, incorporate what you've learned, and practice unfamiliar techniques? Think about ways in which you can set time aside for reaching your developmental goals.
- *Situations.* Is your department implementing new tools or systems – new software, for example, or a new phone system – that might distract you from your developmental challenges? Think about how you will balance those project needs with your need to practice new skills and perspectives.
- *Systems.* Will a "this is the way we've always done it" attitude in your organization get in the way of your implementing new behaviors? Think about how you can influence support for the changes you may want to make as the result of your attending a development program.
- *Support.* Are the senior people in your organization entrenched in ways of managing people and implementing decisions? Identify members of management you might influence toward the new perspectives you will bring back from your formal developmental experience.

Clearing Roadblocks

Don't be discouraged if you identify some formidable obstacles to your developmental challenges. Although it's unlikely that you can single-handedly change your company's policies and culture or create large blocks of time for assimilating and practicing what you learn, you can take steps to protect your personal and

your organization's investment in a formal development program. Think about how you might bring the lessons you'll learn into your daily work, set aside time to practice new skills and perspectives at work and away from work, secure cooperation and endorsement from the people with whom you work, and ask for feedback on your behavior.

Integrate lessons. During your developmental experience, and certainly after, you will probably identify one or more areas in which you can change the way you manage. But changing your leadership style won't just happen. You've got to integrate what you learn into your work and into your personal life. Perhaps you want to start by giving your direct reports more frequent, informal feedback to help them develop. You may want to build more trusting and collaborative relationships with people in other functional areas. Think about what changes in the environment would support those initiatives: Would fewer memos and more face-to-face communication help? Should staff meetings be structured for more brainstorming and information sharing and less progress reporting? Would your leadership effectiveness be enhanced through a series of discussions with your direct reports to find out about their personal goals and how they can be aligned with organizational goals? Plan for how you will create the mechanisms to put your ideas into action. Realize that you will need opportunities for practicing new skills and behaviors, and expect that you'll need to make time for feedback and personal reflection on how those changed behaviors contribute to your managerial effectiveness.

Make time. If you don't allot yourself the time to work out the lessons you've brought back from a development program, your schedule is likely to fill with other priorities. Think ahead and use creative solutions to create the time you need to act on your developmental challenges. If you want to spend an hour at the

beginning of each workday in study and review, for example, mark that appointment with yourself in your daily organizer and honor that commitment as you would honor any meeting or critical task.

Get cooperation. You may need cooperation from others to create an opportunity for you to review and practice what you've learned. Negotiate for that cooperation ahead of time. Be straightforward in your requests. For example, you might ask that you be free from phone calls and other interruptions for a certain period of each day, or you might ask that meetings not be scheduled for those hours. If possible, you might not want to schedule business trips in the first few weeks after the program. Think about how different levels of cooperation from peers, your boss, and direct reports can help you work toward your developmental goals. If you're trying to learn to delegate more, for example, ask your direct reports to be prepared to take on more responsibility and to expect less detailed oversight from you.

Ask for feedback. Changing a persistent, habitual, and ineffective managerial behavior is about as easy as starting an exercise program when you're a dedicated couch potato. New skills don't come overnight or without effort. Tell your associates what you are trying to achieve and enlist their help by asking them for feedback on your efforts. Ask for feedback that describes the situation related to your behavior, your behavior itself, and the impact your behavior had on the person giving you the feedback.

Look outside of work. Perhaps your organization isn't ready for the changes you anticipate. If that's the case, look outside of your job for opportunities to use your developmental lessons. Professional organizations, civic clubs, faith-based communities, and volunteer work often provide excellent opportunities to develop a range of leadership abilities.

Turning Lessons into Leadership

Many managers think of a formal development program as an event – a few days or a week set apart from their usual routines and activities. But a development program is more than an event. It's one part of a continuing process of building the skills and perspectives you need to become and remain an effective manager and leader.

The experience you have in a development program is shaped by your expectations, your motivation, and your preparation. It's an experience that extends into your future, setting a path of information, ideas, strategies, and creativity designed to accelerate your professional and personal growth.

Only you can determine how much benefit you will get from such a program. Only you can make the connections between your own needs, the needs of your organization, and the program's content and approach. With the right preparation, motivation, and action a formal development program can provide a deeper level of knowledge, a larger range of skills and techniques, and a broader perspective on what it takes to lead people and organizations.

Suggested Readings

Douglas, C. A., & McCauley, C. D. (1997). A survey on the use of formal developmental relationships in organizations. *Issues & Observations, 17*(1/2), 6-9.

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Background

The background for this guidebook comes from two primary sources: (1) research involving the factors necessary for developmental success and (2) experiences drawn from working with CCL program participants and their organizations. The research foundation comes from a study conducted by Jennifer Martineau that drew on a sample of managers in a large computer services organi-

zation. Employees participated in a multiphase development program intended to build supervisory skills. The results showed that preparation for a development program was as important for its success as were actions taken once participants returned to the workplace. Furthermore, participants had strong expectations for what they would experience in terms of support and barriers prior to attending the program, which had an impact on their learning and skill development.

CCL's experience with participants and their organizations illustrates the effects of clear expectations and high motivation as participants enter the classroom on the first day of a development program. Sometimes these attitudes can change during the course of the program, but often they will carry over with the participants as they return to the workplace. At that point participants may be successful in creating a supportive environment for applying what they learned during the program, or they may face obstacles which add to the challenge of their developing new leadership skills.

Key Point Summary

Many managers, either through their own initiative or through company sponsorship, attend formal leadership development programs. But many of those managers show up for such programs without clear expectations, goals, or a plan to put what they learn into practice when they return to the office. Managers can substantially increase the benefits to themselves and to their organizations by preparing for any formal developmental experience they are scheduled to attend.

That preparation includes clarifying expectations, understanding and increasing motivation for attending, and making sure that the work environment supports the changes in behavior and perspective that lead to more effective leadership.

Managers can clarify their expectations by determining the content of the program and by mapping that content to their specific developmental needs, both in their immediate circumstances and with an eye toward their long-term career goals. Managers should also connect their personal leadership development goals to their company's strategic goals. Another way for managers to prepare for a formal developmental experience is for them to gauge their enthusiasm for attending and making sure they are motivated to make the most from the experience.

Participating in a formal development program is just the first step in building skills that can make a manager a more effective leader. When managers return from such a program to their established routine, they may find that organizational constraints hinder their putting into practice what they've learned. Managers can prepare their work environment so that it is more supportive of their developmental efforts by assessing any possible roadblocks to their development, sharing their goals with others, integrating what they've learned into everyday work life and personal life, setting aside time for practicing what they've learned, and asking for feedback on their new behaviors.

With the right preparation, motivation, and action a formal development program can provide managers with a deeper understanding of the skills and perspectives required to lead people and organizations.

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FOR THE PRACTICING MANAGER

Preparing for Development

If you're scheduled to participate in a leadership development program, or if you're considering such a program, you can substantially increase the benefits to yourself and to your organization by preparing for the development experience. This guidebook will show you how to prepare yourself and how you can help prepare your colleagues and your work environment to make the most of a formal development program.

LEAD CONTRIBUTORS

Jennifer Martineau is a research scientist at CCL and works with staff, clients, and external evaluators to create new evaluation methods for CCL programs. She also manages client-specific evaluation studies that enable CCL and its clients to learn about the impact of CCL interventions on participants and their organizations. She holds a PhD in industrial and organizational psychology from Pennsylvania State University.

Ellie Johnson is custom program manager at CCL's Greensboro campus. In this role she manages all customized development processes and programs that originate at that site. She also serves on the faculty of several of CCL's open-enrollment programs, including The Women's Leadership Program, Leadership and Teamwork, and Foundations of Leadership. She holds an M.A. in organizational communication from Wake Forest University.

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